

Washington, DC –Congressmen Earl Blumenauer (D – Ore.), Don Manzullo (R – Ill.), Sam Farr (D – Calif.), and Gary Miller (R – Calif.), announced today the formation of a bipartisan Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Caucus. As part of their ongoing efforts to increase congressional awareness of the UXO issue, the Congressmen started this caucus to raise awareness about the health, safety, and environmental risks of UXO and to highlight the challenges faced by communities and the federal government in the clean up of UXO and redevelopment of former military properties.

“I am excited that the UXO Caucus will bring a new level of attention to our bipartisan efforts to deal with the problem of unexploded ordnance,” Congressman Earl Blumenauer said. “This is one of those common sense issues where the federal government can make a big difference for our communities with only a small investment. The federal government is the largest land-owner in the country and should take this opportunity to lead by example. Cleaning up UXO is important not only for public safety and environmental reasons, but can provide a real economic boost at home.”

UXO is the unexploded bombs and military munitions that failed to explode during military training or testing. These munitions may be found on or buried under the surface of more than 39 million acres of former military properties.

“Several years ago, the Army wanted to fence off thousands of acres of land in the district I represent because it was loaded with Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). The former Savanna Army Depot -- a munitions testing site -- is now a national wildlife refuge open to the public because of teamwork between my office, the Army, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Protection Agency to seek alternative ways to clean up the site and provide public access,” House Small Business Committee Chairman Don Manzullo said. “It is this type of teamwork and information sharing we hope to provide through the Unexploded Ordnance Caucus to speed up UXO clean-up sites so the land can again be productive.”

Congressman Sam Farr added, “Having dealt with the conundrum of UXO clean up at Fort Ord, I know as well as anybody about the challenges of removing this contamination from our neighborhoods and communities. I am proud to be a co-chair of the new UXO Caucus and hope to really energize Congress to concentrate appropriate resources to resolving this environmental threat. I especially thank Congressman Blumenauer for being the impetus behind this effort and look forward to working with him and the other members of the caucus.”

“The Army Corps of Engineers have worked hard to remove unexploded ordnance in our communities. For example, in Orange County, California, they have helped ensure the public can fully access O’Neil Park, a 1,700-acre, heavily wooded sanctuary with unprecedented views of the Pacific Ocean and towering Santa Ana Mountains,” said Congressman Gary

Miller. “However, there are still millions of acres across the country that need the Army Corps’ attention. I hope the new caucus will highlight the Army Corps’ efforts to open up these lands, while helping us learn about innovative strategies to make sure all of our communities are free from the dangers of UXOs.”

Over the next year, the caucus plans to host briefings on the many issues associated with UXO – from unexploded ordnance being turned into the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that threaten American troops in Iraq to the way that new clean-up technologies can free up millions of acres of land at home for economic development, housing, recreation, or open space. The caucus will also work to facilitate Congressional funding and legislative action on UXO cleanup to increase investment in technology, create business opportunities at home, and reduce the health and safety risk for local communities.